IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with <u>underlining</u> and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (ORIGINAL), (CURRENTLY AMENDED), (CANCELLED), (WITHDRAWN), (NEW), (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED), or (NOT ENTERED).

Please AMEND claim 1 and ADD new claim 7 as follows:

1.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A communication setting management system for distributing communication characteristics setting to a plurality of communication entities <u>connected to a network</u>, comprising:

a setting template entry/edit unit operated by a first administrator to enter or edit a setting template that collects contents to be set for the <u>plurality of</u> communication entities <u>connected to the network</u>, with reference to information on a concrete method of setting the communication entities;

a setting template storing unit storing each setting template entered or edited by the setting template entry/edit unit as operated by the first administrator;

an application rule entry/edit unit operated by a second administrator to enter or edit application rules prescribing rules corresponding to the setting template, entered or edited in the setting template entry/edit unit operated by the first administrator, which is to be applied to a communication having a specific attribute;

an application rule storing unit storing each application rule entered or edited by the application rule entry/edit unit; and

retrieval and response function unit selecting an application rule from the application rule storing unit in accordance with an attribute of a corresponding destination communication entity, reading from the setting template storing unit a setting template having a setting template name specified by the selected application rule, and distributing the read setting template to the corresponding destination communication entity.

2.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The communication setting management system according to claim 1, further comprising:

setting template collective entering unit collectively entering a group of previously defined setting templates into the setting template storing unit.

3.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The communication setting management system according to claim 1, further comprising:

a plurality of management domains each having at least one communication entity, the management domains communicating via a network; and

a communication setting management apparatus disposed in each of the plurality of management domains the communication setting management apparatus, disposed in a corresponding management domain, imparting, on a management domain basis, different communication characteristics settings to respective communications between communication entities belonging to different management domains, each communication characteristics setting being managed on a corresponding management domain basis.

4.   (CANCELLED)

5.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The communication setting management system according to claim 3, further comprising:

a contradiction detection function unit mutually interchanging information between communication setting management apparatuses disposed in respective, different management domains, and detecting a contradiction between the information and the setting template and the application rule of its own management domain.

6.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The communication setting management system according to claim 5, further comprising:

a contradiction modification function unit modifying a contradiction, at the time when the contradiction is detected, that a setting template or setting templates specified by the contradiction detection function unit according to the application rule to be the same, instead, are not.

7.   (NEW) A communication setting management method for distributing communication characteristics setting to a plurality of communication entities connected to a network, comprising:

entering or editing, by a first administrator, a setting template that collects contents to be set for the plurality of communication entities connected to the network, with reference to information on a concrete method of setting the communication entities;

storing each setting template entered or edited by the entering or editing as operated by

the first administrator;

entering or editing, by a second administrator, application rules prescribing rules corresponding to the setting template, which is to be applied to a communication having a specific attribute;

storing each application rule entered or edited by the entering or editing; and

selecting an application rule from the storing each application rule in accordance with an attribute of a corresponding destination communication entity, reading from the storing each setting template a setting template having a setting template name specified by the selected application rule, and distributing the read setting template to the corresponding destination communication entity.